

# GRANT REVIEW OPPORTUNITY SAVE THE DATE!

## The Corporation for National and Community Service is seeking expert reviewers for its 2016 Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Classic grant competition

**WHAT:** The Social Innovation Fund awards grants to and works with grantmaking institutions that in turn direct resources to nonprofit organizations to validate and grow innovative, promising approaches to challenges facing local communities in three priority issue areas:

- Youth Development – Preparing children and youth for success in school, active citizenship, productive work, and healthy and safe lives, including crime reduction initiatives focused on juvenile delinquency and victimization prevention and response.
- Economic Opportunity – Increasing economic opportunities and financial stability for economically disadvantaged individuals and families.
- Healthy Futures – Improving health outcomes, promoting healthy lifestyles, and decreasing health disparities that disproportionately affect low-income communities.

**WHO:** We are seeking *Program Reviewers* with expertise in social innovation, philanthropy, evidence-based solutions, scaling, collective impact, opportunity youth, healthy futures, economic opportunity, and youth development; and *Evaluation Reviewers* with expertise in the range of research designs from randomized control trials to pre/post-test designs.

This is an exciting opportunity to join one of a small number of review panels that will assess SIF Classic applications against the criteria established in the SIF Classic Notice of Federal Funding Opportunity (Notice), and contribute to the selection of successful programs.

**WHEN:** The review will take place approximately **late May to early June**.

**WHY:** To apply your experience and expertise to assessing applications for this innovative federal government approach to addressing compelling national and community needs.

**HOW TO APPLY:** Read the information and follow the guidance provided below and submit your resume to [PeerReviewers@cns.gov](mailto:PeerReviewers@cns.gov) by **April 22, 2016**.

## Background

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Volunteer Generation Fund, CNCS has helped to engage millions of citizens in meeting community and national challenges through service and volunteer action. Through the Social Innovation Fund (SIF), CNCS has augmented its traditional activities with an enhanced focus on identifying and growing innovative, evidence-based approaches to our nation's challenges.

The purpose of the Social Innovation Fund is to grow the impact of innovative community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the United States. The Social Innovation Fund directs resources toward increasing the evidence-base, capacity, and scale of the organizations it funds in order to improve the lives of people served by those organizations. The Social Innovation Fund also generates broader impact by leveraging the grant program in various ways to improve how philanthropies, federal government departments and agencies, state and local government, and community-based organizations deploy funds to address social challenges. Additionally, it enhances the ability of the nonprofit sector to support the growth of innovative, high-impact organizations.

As one of the President's "tiered-evidence initiatives," the Social Innovation Fund embodies a commitment to use rigorous evidence to both select recipients of federal funding and to validate the impact of its funded program models. The Social

Innovation Fund is driven by three core principles: (1) many of the most compelling solutions to persistent social problems in low-income communities are being developed in those communities and not in federal offices in Washington, D.C.; (2) significant impact can be generated for society by proactively identifying the best community-based solutions, strengthening their evidence base, and supporting the growth of their impact; and (3) the federal government can help drive social innovation by stimulating, focusing and enhancing public-private partnerships and cross-sector collaborations to grow the impact of the best community solutions.

To learn more about the Social Innovation Fund, please visit our website at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/SIF>.

## Areas of Expertise and Qualifications

CNCS is recruiting **Program Reviewers** and **Evaluation Reviewers**.

**PROGRAM REVIEWERS** will be reviewing all of the content in the Program Design, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy sections of submitted applications. Program Reviewers should have expertise in social innovation, philanthropy, evidence-based solutions, scaling, collective impact, opportunity youth, healthy futures, economic opportunity and/or youth development and possess the following qualifications:

- Minimum of a college degree, graduate degree preferred or commensurate experience;
- 10+ years of relevant experience in the nonprofit and/or philanthropic sectors, including multiple years in a leadership role. Examples include:
  - Leadership positions at nonprofit organizations, foundations, social enterprises or corporate philanthropies, especially those that have histories of program replication;
  - Graduate work in a relevant subject, (i.e. nonprofit management, business administration, public administration/policy, or relevant social science);
  - Academic positions in which reviewers have taught or published on the social sector;
  - Program Officer or management positions with grantmaking organizations, especially those that fund evidence-based programs serving low-income communities;
  - Authorship of articles or books or significant presentations on the subject of nonprofit management, philanthropy, and/or social entrepreneurship/innovation;
  - Management consulting experience with nonprofit or grantmaking organizations; and
  - Relevant board or committee membership
- Some depth of knowledge about evaluation of social programs—reviewers do not need to be able to design a research study, but should be able to analyze research results, be familiar with a wide range of evaluation tools, and understand common evaluation challenges; and, preferably
- Issue expertise in economic opportunity, youth development, or healthy futures; general anti-poverty expertise would be an appropriate proxy.

**Note:** Practical, hands-on experience working closely with or within nonprofit organizations serving low-income communities is preferred.

**EVALUATION REVIEWERS** will focus on key evidence and evaluation sections of the applications including: submitted evaluation proposals, descriptions of evaluation experience, and evaluation budget justifications. Because of the SIF Classic's emphasis on promoting movement along the evidence of effectiveness continuum, it is imperative that reviewers be familiar with research designs that capture impact such as randomized control trials, quasi-experimental designs, and pre/post-test designs. Evaluation Reviewers should have the following qualifications:

- Minimum of a master's degree, Ph.D. preferred;
- 10+ years of relevant experience in nonprofit or public sector program evaluation. Examples include:
  - Significant graduate work in evaluation or related subject areas;

- Project leadership or experience as primary investigator for program evaluations;
- Academic positions in which reviewers have taught and/or published on program evaluation;
- Authorship of articles or books or significant presentations on the subject of program evaluation or evidenced-based program investment and expansion; and
- Serving as an evaluation consultant to nonprofit or grantmaking organizations
- Deep knowledge of social program evaluations including research design, implementation, analysis, and budgeting, and providing technical support as evidenced by evaluation studies conducted, reports authored, etc.

**Note:** Performance measure analysis alone is not sufficient evaluation experience. Reviewers should demonstrate experience with impact research designs such as randomized control trials, quasi-experimental designs, and/or pre/post-test designs.

### **Additional Qualifications for Program and Evaluation Reviewers**

CNCS is also particularly seeking Program and Evaluation Reviewers who possess:

- Management expertise including ability to assess intermediary and subgrantee organizational capacity, human resources, performance measures and fiscal health; and
- Diverse geographic experience, especially including experience working in both urban and rural areas.

Experience participating in other federal application review processes is desirable, but not required. In general, both types of reviewers should have the following: strong written and oral communication skills; strong time-management skills; and demonstrated ability to collaborate.

## **Overview of the Social Innovation Fund Reviewer Role**

The FY2016 Social Innovation Fund Expert Review is utilizing a Field Review model, allowing reviewers to collaborate and complete their review responsibilities remotely.

SIF Classic expert reviewers will be assigned to panels and assess approximately four to six applications from intermediary grantmaking organizations against the review criteria in the Notice. The review criteria fall into three categories: Program, Organizational Capacity, and Cost Effectiveness/Budget Adequacy. Generally, reviewers will assess whether applicants:

- Make a persuasive case for the need related to the issue area(s) they will address in their identified target geographical area(s), provide a compelling theory of change related to their strategy for addressing the identified need, convey why the approach is innovative, introducing an evidence-based solution that is more effective than those currently in the marketplace and describe their own ability to successfully support the approach they propose;
- Propose clear and comprehensive plans with high likelihood of success for selecting quality subgrantees, managing and supporting evaluations of the impact of their subgrantees' interventions, and growing the impact of funded program models to reach more individuals and communities;
- Provide information on their significant experience in making competitive grants, managing or supporting evaluations and using data in their decision-making, and growing the impact of previously funded program models;
- Describe strong capability of providing program and financial oversight, a commitment to sustaining SIF investment priorities, and a compelling strategy for supporting the sustainability of their subgrantees;
- Propose a reasonable and justifiable budget that will support the capacity necessary to achieve desired outputs and outcomes, and a persuasive description of their strategy for securing their own matching funds and supporting their subgrantees in securing additional matching funds.

Detailed questions to be answered by intermediary organizations in their application narratives are outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (Notice). To read the full Notice for the 2016 Social Innovation Fund, please click on the following link: [www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/sif-classic-NOFA-FY16](http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2016/sif-classic-NOFA-FY16)

## Requirements and Expectations

The SIF Classic review will utilize a Field Review Model, allowing Reviewers to collaborate and complete their review remotely. The review process lasts 3 weeks, and can take about 40-50 hours of active time to complete depending on individual and panel working styles. This requires Reviewers to have the ability to work efficiently, cooperatively, and reliably to effectively complete assigned panel deliverables. Therefore, a comfort level with basic Internet technologies and regular access to a high-speed internet connection are important. In addition,

- Each reviewer will be assigned to a review panel with **approximately four to six applications** to review. Reviewers will read and assess their assigned applications individually, then participate in panel discussions regarding those applications. Each reviewer will be responsible for completing a high quality review form for each application read.
- There are mandatory orientations, training sessions, and panel calls that will likely require alterations to your normal work and/or activity schedule. This can be an energizing and intense period in which tasks will come due regularly.

CNCS offers reviewers, with the exception of federal employees, a *modest honorarium* for their participation in a grant review. The honorarium amount varies with the participant's role and expected deliverables, but begins at \$1,000.

## Conflict of Interest

**Before applying**, potential expert reviewers should carefully assess whether they are likely to face any Conflicts of Interest (COI) with respect to the SIF Classic competition. Reviewers with existing or substantial previous relationships to a SIF Classic Competition applicant will not be allowed to serve as an expert reviewer. If potential reviewers answer "Yes" to any of the following questions, they may be disqualified from being a reviewer for this competition.

- Are you an employee or consultant for an organization seeking SIF funding?
- Are you preparing or planning to help prepare an application for SIF funding?
- Will your personal financial interests be affected by the outcome of the SIF Classic grant competition?
- Have you held or are you holding any office, governing board membership, or similar body membership in an institution seeking SIF funding?

You will be required to provide information on potential conflicts of interest as part of your application to become a reviewer. If you have questions about a potential COI, please contact [PeerReviewers@cns.gov](mailto:PeerReviewers@cns.gov) with the details of your affiliation. CNCS will review the information and make a determination.

## How to Apply

If you are interested in participating in the review, believe you have the necessary qualifications, and are available to commit the required 40-50 hours during the period of the review, please follow the steps listed below by **April 22, 2016**.

1. Ensure you have no potential conflicts of interest
2. Send a Notification of Interest email to [PeerReviewers@cns.gov](mailto:PeerReviewers@cns.gov) by **April 22, 2016**, making sure that you:
  - a. Write "Interested 2016 SIF Classic Reviewer – LAST NAME" in the Subject Line
  - b. Include whether you are applying as a **Program Reviewer** or an **Evaluation Reviewer**
  - c. Attach your resume for review of your qualifications

If you are selected to participate as a Reviewer for the 2016 SIF Classic Grant Competition, you will be asked to submit a profile in CNCS' web-based grants management system, eGrants in order to receive the honoraria.

Please note that submission of a Notification of Interest in this review does not confirm you for participation.